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THE FUNSTON DOUBLE TRACK

WILLARD WATTLES



THE FUNSTON DOUBLE TRACK
AND OTHER VERSES

by

PRIVATE WILLARD WATTLES

Tenth Sanitary Train, Tenth Division,

CAMP FUNSTON, KANSAS

MEMBER OF THE VIGILANTES

MANHATTAN, KANSAS

N. A. CRAWFORD

1919

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TO MAJOR-GENERAL LEONARD WOOD:

A SOLDIER IN DISCIPLINE BUT A
FATHER IN AFFECTION, HE HAS
BUILT THE ARMY OF DEMOCRACY

FOREWORD

The proceeds of the sale of this booklet will be devoted to the establishment of a Kansas Poetry Prize, competition for which will be open to natives of Kansas.

The verses in this booklet appeared from time to time, during and after the war, in the *Kansas City Star*, the *Springfield Republican*, the *Boston Evening Transcript*, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, and *Trench and Camp*; also in *Fifes and Drums*, the contributors to which were The Vigilantes and which was published by George H. Doran Company. Grateful acknowledgement is made to the original publishers for permission to reprint the material.

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THE FUNSTON DOUBLE TRACK

*(On the way to Funston, when troop trains pass,
the men going in different directions reach out
and slap hands)*

The trains that move to Funston
Run on a double track,
And fast as new recruits go down
The old recruits come back ;
And some are clad in khaki
And some are queerly dressed
In all the odd disguises
Of gaudy shirt and vest.

The trains that come from Funston
Go rushing to the east
Across the greening corn land
Where harvesting has ceased ;
And every train that passes
Is thunderous with noise,
Each window overflowing
With ruddy, laughing boys.

The trains that go to Funston
Move steadily to the west
Freighted with equal cheering,
With equal honor blessed ;
And as the trains are passing
The men reach out their hands
And at the touch electric
Each rookie understands.

“You’ll like it, boy, you’ll like it,”
The lads in khaki shout;
“Hey, bo, where are you going?”
“Don’t know; we’ll soon find out.”
A touch, a laugh, a passing,
“I’ll meet you coming back,”
Where trains go down to Funston
Upon the double track.

UPON THE HILLS OF FUNSTON

Upon the hills of Funston the yellow prim-
rose glows,
And tangled in the grasses is the shy, four-
petaled rose,
With its golden dust of pollen and the wild
bees hurrying
Through the green aisles of young summer
like small, blazing suns a-wing.

Upon the hills of Funston the grass grows
long and deep,
And there are pleasant places where a man
might fall asleep;
Where overhead the white clouds go careen-
ing down the sky,
And it never seems at Funston that a man
could ever die.

Upon the hills of Funston there are patient
ranks of brown,
Where lads with guns and bayonets go
marching up and down;
There's a splendor rests upon them from the
tender, brooding skies,
And the ringing sword of freedom is the an-
swer of their eyes.

Upon the hills of Funston the meadowlarks
swing low
But there are hills in Flanders where the lads
in brown will go,

And many pleasant places in the sunny fields
of France
Where a man may rest him quiet and be mer-
ry of the chance.

Upon the hills of Funston, in the sun and
wind and rain,
The sowing of our parents in their darkest
hours of pain
Bears its golden, laughing harvest out of
which the perfect Bread
Shall be broken for the nations that are call-
ing to be fed.

How beautiful, how beautiful the brown and
dusty feet
Of those who bring glad tidings that shall
make the whole world sweet;
And there upon the Funston hills the doom
of Hate is sealed,
Where the patient lines of khaki tramp across
a rain-drenched field.

("The Funston Double Track" and Upon the Hills of Funston" have been
set to music by Elizabeth Uhl's Lindsey, Overland Park, Kansas.)

THE DEPOT BRIGADE

I went to join the army, I thought 'twas
mighty fine
To be a gory hero in the very front line,
To mess around with hand grenades—'twould
be amazing fun
To jab a hungry bayonet into a howling Hun,
To get my right arm shot in two and lose my
eagle eye
And hang my spinal column on the barbed-
wire fence to dry.
King George would come to greet me and
take me back to Blighty
And pin a colored ribbon on my pretty little
nighty;
Then when the war was over, with all my
deeds bewilderin'
I'd scare into coniption fits my children's
children's children.

And so I came to Funston,—the weather
went to zero,
And underneath the shower-bath I hardly
looked a hero.
They stuck me in the kitchen, I mounted
guard all night,
And I was such an Ichabod my clothes they
looked a fright.
I scrubbed the hall a dozen times and fin-
ished up the floor;
The corporal, he came along and said, "Now
scrub some more."
They bawled me out at reveille, they nagged
me at retreat,

They made remarks I really think I'd better
not repeat;
But worst of all their insults—alas, the sorry
trade—
They turned at last and stuck me in the De-
pot Brigade.

Now all the friends I ever had are fighting
Huns in France,
They've raised Old Glory to the winds in
Pershing's great advance,
They've died in German dug-outs, they've
given lives to save
Some other wounded fellow from a muddy
Flanders grave.
They've swept like eagles through the sky
and won the cross of war,
Their youth is like a flaming sword, their fate
a falling star.
But I am here in Funston—God knows how
long I'll stay,
I search the printed list of dead with grow-
ing dread each day,
For when the war is over and all of history
made,
They'll say, "He stayed in Funston in the De-
pot Brigade."

(Shortly after the publication of the foregoing stanzas the author secured
a transfer to the Tenth Division.)

THE DOUGHBOY'S LADIES' MONTHLIES

Says the Sergeant to the Corporal, "Let's see
you make a noise,
For someone's sent some magazines to our
doughboys;
Some ladies' aid society has gone and done
us kind,
So let's unpack our stocking, and see what
we kin find."

The Corporal to the Sergeant, he up an' sez,
sez he,
"There isn't many high-brows in this here
compan-ee;
But what we'll do with *Harp's Bazaar* is more
than I can tell
Though they say there's lots of readin' in the
Ladies Home Journell."

The Sergeant stopped to masticate a chew of
Navy Plug,
"We'll use that *House and Garden* when we
buy the parlor rug;
An' when that Denver rookie starts to wash
his overalls
He kin get some nice suggestions by readin'
in *McCall's.*"

The Corporal made two shining braids from
out his auburn hair,
"I think I'll rest a bit," sez he, "an' take up
Vanity Fair;

I find my figure so obese, I really think I'll
try
To cut my Butterick jacket-suit from *Fashions*
on the sly."

The Sergeant shook two loaded dice, and
drew another card,
"I learned this game of checkers from the
Youth's Companion, pard,
An' when I start to throw a bridge across a
boilin' canyon
I'll read up that new tatting stitch in the
Woman's Home Companion."

The Corporal raised his pewter lid and blew
the foam away*,
"I get so tender-hearted when I'm readin'
Vogue all day,
I sometimes think there ain't no use of high
ideals an' vision
Unless my ruffled bathin' suit is genuine Par-
isian."

The Sergeant to the Corporal, he up an' sez,
sez he,
"I think that's all the magazines for this here
compan-ee,
An' when the boys has read 'em through, I'm
sure they'll all be pleadin'
To have some more good fashion-plates for
desultory readin'."

*It is of course to be understood that the liquid in the container
is Bevo.

ARMY SHOES

For a Sammy in the army, life is just one
round of pleasure;
From reveille till taps at night somebody's
got his measure:
He hits the floor at a quarter of six and grabs
his clothes and scoots
Where sleepy, cussy sergeant chaps are lin-
ing up recruits,
They bawl him out the whole day long till
he'd like to kill the brutes
And every time he turns around some dog-
goned bugle toots,—
Oh, there's always something popping in
the army.

But it isn't kitchen duty that gets the new
recruity,
It isn't peeling onions or cleaning cuspidors,
It isn't lack of booty or the shave-tail so sa-
lutey,
That makes him pray in his honest way to
soon be done with wars,
It isn't being far from home or being far from
booze,
It isn't things he doesn't have, or things he'd
like to lose,
It's the shoes!

They take his clothes away from him in the
receiving station
And send him shivering down the line like
Adam at Creation.

They poke him in the short ribs and they
 grab him by the tongue,
They say he's got tobacco-heart and can't in-
 flate his lung,
And other personal remarks that seldom have
 been sung
By any poet I have known without his being
 hung;
 Oh, there's always something popping in
 the army.

They give him soap and water because they
 think they'd orter,
They count his spinal column and they mark
 him up with chalk
Till he would give a quarter just to be a
 blooming martyr
And to punch the first young corporal who
 gives him any talk.
It isn't beans and coffee and those peculiar
 stews
In which you meet your long lost child or any-
 thing you choose,
 It's the shoes!

I know at last the reason men are "buried in
 their boots,"
For shoes make splendid coffins for not too
 plump recruits;
Or over there in Flanders they will make a
 cozy row
Of cast-off shoes with heels run down or rup-
 tures in the toe,
And roof them up all shrapnel-proof and cut
 a door below

So every Belgian family has a brand-new
bungalow,—
Oh, there's always something popping in
the army.

It isn't German bullets, or even doctored news
That gives the lonesome Sammy a fit of army
blues,
It's the shoes!

I stood retreat the other night all dressed up
in my best,
The Captain, he looked down the line and
hollered, "Pee-rade rest."
I bent my left leg at the knee and made my
stummick small,
My right foot made a backward march six
inches to the wall,
I grabbed my left thumb, stared in front, and
heard the sergeant bawl:
"You lop-eared loon, look down and see, your
shoe ain't moved at all!"
Oh, there's always something popping in
the army.

If they'd strung me to a girder, I couldn't
even stirred her,
I moved my foot around inside a dozen dif-
ferent ways,
But they said the crime was murder, that I
should have pulled it further,
And sent me up to Leavenworth and give me
thirty days.
It isn't fighting Germans, or the poison gas
they use—
Some day we'll paint old Kaiser Bill a hun-
dred different hues—
It's the shoes!

LITERACHOOR AT CAMP FUNSTON

Oh, all the boys at Funston are a literary lot;
When it comes to writing letters they are
Johnny-on-the-spot.
They're not so strong for Ruskin, Aeschylus,
or Charlie Lamb,
But they're strong as army mustard for the
lays of Uncle Sam,
They come into the "Y" at night in an ab-
sent-minded way
And grab a pen and quart of ink and have
a lot to say—
For though I never read the books they write
in such a hurry
There's someone seems to like them, and so
it's "We should worry!"

A BOX FROM HOME AT FUNSTON

When someone gets a box from home in our
squad-room

Maginnis drops the mopping-stick, and Johnson
drops the broom,

MacPherson's off in a Highland fling, and
Terence begins to caper,

While Sandy yanks at the cotton string and
scatters the wrapping paper.

Oh, here's a pound of chocolate fudge that'll
turn your whiskers green,

And a chicken fried in its juicy hide as brown
as a navy bean;

There's angel-food so gol-darned good that
you reach for another cut,

A box of sinkers sweet with lard and rich as
a hazel-nut.

Here's a thick divinity-brick, so whet your
bowie-knife,

And a cocoanut cake that 'ud almost make a
bridegroom leave his wife.

Like hungry crows we perch in rows on the
foot of O'Reilly's bunk,

Full to the brim, but waitin' for Slim to carve
us another hunk.

"Oh, it's hurry up, you lazy pup, or you'll
never get a smell;

The Kaiser's strong, but Sherman's wrong,
when he says that war is—*Well*,

Maginnis, drop your mopping-stick, and
Johnson drop your broom,

For someone's got a box from home in our
squad-room.

VISITORS' DAY AT FUNSTON

When the folks come down to Funston
With Mother in her best
And Father at the steerin'-wheel
A-sticking out his chest,
With sister Mame excited
At all the things she sees,
And Aunt Maria sayin'
"Why! Ain't there any trees?"
It makes a feller cheerful
In a kind of home-like way
When the folks come down to Funston
On a Visitin' Day.

You meet them at the Hostess House
Beside the Gold Belt Road,
And all the women holler,
"Good gracious, ain't you growed!"
And sister Mame is watchin'
To see if you can spare
One of them shiny buttons,
An' pattin' down her hair,
An' Ma brings out her knittin'
An' says, "We've come to stay."
Oh, it's mighty fine at Funston
On a Visitin' Day.

When the folks come down to Funston
There's lots of things to see:
The barracks and the mess-room
And the infirmary,
The smoke-stacks and the laundry,
The guns all streaked and pied,
Our new alfalfa patches

(We're farmin' on the side),
The Zone an' Army City
Where Father has to pay
Till I'm glad he's got the wallet
On a Visitin' Day.

And then behind the Hostess House
We climb up on the hill
An' see the golden valley
A-lyin' soft an' still,
With all the panerammer
Of woods an' hills an' skies,
It sort of hits you funny
An' gets into your eyes;
For you know across the waters
Where it's all torn mud and clay,
There's lots of people missin'
On a Visitin' Day.

BATTALIONS OF THE SOUL

O ye at home in comfort
Who laugh and love at ease,
Remember those who perish
To guard your luxuries,
Who on the far-flung ocean
Or through the smoke-dimmed trees
Pay with their bodies' anguish
For the soul's lone victories.

You have been quick to strengthen
The sinewed strands of steel,
And squat and spitting monsters
Move forward wheel by wheel;
Across the whitened waters
Cuts swift the avenging keel,
And through the fields of heaven
The awful dews congeal.

But not alone with cannon
Are God's stern battles won,
And not with driven thunder
We smite the shameful Hun:
But with our clean young splendor
And pulses swift that run
We raze the walls of Sodom
And hell's battalions stun.

What will you give to guard us—
Not in red holocaust
When the torn fields are streaming
And storms of shell are tossed—
But in the lonelier trenches
Where faiths of home are lost
And only a day of living
Seems worth the bitter cost?

A song of *Annie Laurie*
In a Y. M. hut at night,
A stamp and sheet of paper,
A book, a pipe alight,
A reel of Charlie Chaplin,
Two boxers squared to fight—
These are the things you pay for
That keep our bodies white.

What are your fields and furrows
Your bursting barns of grain,
The haze of yellow harvests
Across the purple plain,
If, when the war is over
And your sons come home again,
The soul's last fort is taken
And faith's defenders slain?

(Written for the United War Work Campaign of Kansas.)

/ ENLISTED

Have you heard the shiver of bodies hurled
Chest on crashing chest,
When thigh-bones snap like pistol shots
And men meet breast to breast?
Have you seen the feet of a maddened horse
Red-wet with the wine of war
And wondered in crushing a comrade's face
What you had killed him for?

Ever the sweep of the wave of men
On the reef of jagged death,
And frozen faces like cockle-shells
Where the breaker billoweth,
The outflung arms of a down-lipped boy
With his throat shot through—
Perhaps his shoulder brushed your own
Or he slept last night by you.

My fathers followed Washington
Into the forests dim,
The blood of Warren at Bunker Hill
In my veins runs from him,
When Perry crossed from ship to ship
They bent their arms to row,
They faced the Mexicans' livid hail
In the shattered Alamo.

The Susquehanna knew their tents,
They perished at Bull Run,
Shenandoah saw our dead
Staring at the sun;

We marched with Sherman to the sea,
Starved at Andersonville,
And one of us died by the barbed-wire fence
Under San Juan Hill.

You cannot change the written scroll
Nor alter the charted plan,
Ever must moaning women quail
And man make war on man;
Out of strength must sweetness come—
Out of sacrifice
We melt the metal and forge the key
To enter Paradise.

I thank my fathers for what they paid
On the altar of the years,
I thank the women who gave me birth
In agony and tears;
I could not wish that life should ask
One payment less from me,
And the bugle-call of the arming hosts
Sets their old passion free.

OH, BOY! OH, JOY

(Based on an incident of the Tuscania sinking)

"Oh, boy! oh, joy! where do we go from here,"
So the band was playing while the ship swam
clear.

The trip was nearly over, Erin was ahead,
Soon we would be tramping down the Flan-
ders lanes instead.

Smoke was fogging upward, the long low
room was blue,
While many khaki tales went round, and none
of them was true.

Then sudden came the crash of doom, and all
the lights went out,
"Steady, boys, they've hit us," came our cap-
tain's ready shout.

Groping quickly upward, each one found his
waiting boat,
But five of them were shattered so we knew
they couldn't float.

There was calling through the shadows
where one sought to find his chum
When a rocket split the darkness that was
throbbing like a drum.

Then the lifeboats struck the water loaded
to the very brim
And there wasn't time to bother with the man
who couldn't swim.

Then there came a cheery whistle from a lad
whose ruddy chin
Hardly cleared the broken wreckage, "Hi
there, fellows, take me in."

When we said we couldn't take him, that the
boat was loaded down
And another man would swamp us so the
rest of us would drown,

Quick he turned and gave up trying, but his
laughter rippled clear,
*"Oh, boy! oh, joy where do we go from
here."*

TO THE GERMAN EMPEROR AND
ALL HIS CLAN

Now that avenging armies
Hurl back your shattered lines,
You lift your cheating proffers
And tune your subtle whines:
The flail is raised to smite you
And now before it fall
You would avert the whip-lash
In fate's stern judgment-hall.

Across the fields of Belgium
You leave the spoor of hell,
We trace the Beast retreating
And mark his actions well;
You launch a rain of shrapnel
At wounded men in boats,
The while you cry us "Comrade"
With blackly perjured throats.

We have been stern and patient,
We have withheld our hand
In that firm-lipped appraisalment
You do not understand;
Now you shall have our answer
In storm of belching shell:
"No covenant with devils,
No compromise with Hell!"

IN A Y. M. HUT AT FUNSTON

I have heard America singing
In deep, full-throated choruses,
I have seen the youth of my country
Lift up the banner of their fathers
And with the sword of laughter achieve a
 silent honor.

There are those who arose in the dawning
 and kissed and parted,
Who never again shall hear the cricket re-
 plying
Out of the dim-lit midnight;
There are those who have seen
The lilt of a head and the backward glance
 of assurance turned in the doorway, with
 the old, old gesture of boyhood;
There are those who shall plow all day in a
 motionless furrow.

But I have heard the gathering of natural,
 melodious laughter;
And I know that no nation, no matter how
 haughty,
Can stand in the hour when the young, swift
 men of my country
Come to the final ambush laughing and sing-
 ing.

(Written in May, 1918.)

AUTUMN HILLS OF FUNSTON

*(To the memory of Lieutenant Robert C. Westman
of Massachusetts, killed in action August 10, 1918)*

Across the hills of Funston the autumn rains
have swept,
And silent are the grasses where the tiny
creatures crept;
Brown and red and yellow are the hollows
of the hills,
And violet the twilight where the waning sun-
set fills
All the little vales and gullies where the
prairie roses glowed
In early June in Funston beside the trampled
road.

For yesterday the word came from the sister
of a friend.
"Bob died in France in August," were the
simple words she penned
Yet they turned my heart to ashes and they
drew across the sky
A veil that clouds the sunshine till the day I
come to die;
I could have spared a hundred from the store
of friends I keep
If only death had lifted the sickle from this
sleep.

O autumn hills of Funston where I wait a
prisoner
With hands and feet so fettered that I can-
not even stir,

The glory of the summer and the promise of
the spring
Are smit with frost of autumn and with black-
ened withering;
There's a new made grave in Alsace where
the sudden poppies start
But it's autumn here in Funston and it's win-
ter in my heart.

LADS OF THE KHAKI RETURNING

You tell me the war is soon over,
That Hunland has crumbled down
And peace in triumphant advances
Has won through each flaming town.
I greet you, rejoicer, with gladness,
Yet mine is the harder fate,
For peace with her banners and bugles
Has come to me too late.

In a grave on the Lorraine sector
Where I cannot know even the place,
Lies quiet a torn young body,
My lad of the shining face.
He rose in the hour of our anguish
With his eyes on the ultimate star;
Now never again may I greet him,
He has wandered so far.

O honor and beauty and splendor
Of manhood as clean as the wind,
O hands that were hearty to welcome,
O Roland whose trumpet was thinned,
Who blew in the beleaguered passes
The horn of our desperate chance,
Whose faith and whose body were white as
The lilies of France!

The lads of the khaki returning
March down the long lanes of the flag,
And some of their coat-sleeves are empty,
And some are on crutches that drag;
They are back to the home of their fathers,
They have stormed the battalions of Hate,
Yet one face of gay laughter is absent—
Peace, you are late, you are late!

THE WAR AT HOME

God of our fathers, with bowed hearts we
come
In this glad hour when the unscathed rejoices;
Strike Thou each little boaster awed and
dumb
Before the flame of Pentecostal voices.
Our youth has stormed the hosts of hell and
won,
Yet we who pay the price of their oblation
Know that the greater war is just begun
Which makes humanity the nation's Nation.

PRAYER IN TIME OF VICTORY

God of our fathers, Who hast called once
more
Our far-flung legions to the parent shore
Where England guards the gateway of the
seas
And France upholds man's old equalities,
Where Belgium bleeds beneath the steady
stars
And Serbia flames through freedom's avatars,
Where grace of Florence and the hills of
Rome
Still lift the cross to fling hell's cohorts home,
Grant Thou, our God Who nerved Cromwell
with steel,
In Maenad forms cried loud *A bas Bastille!*
Who breathed through Garibaldi and Rous-
seau
And lifted Lincoln to prove a nation's woe,—
That we not lightly overthrow the suns
Too young, too proud, for all our belching
guns.

Remember Thou the agony of Thy cross
Which turned to triumph all the bitter loss.
America runs swift upon appointed feet . . .
Stay Thou our steps lest they become too
fleet,
Break Thou our backs and crown our brows
with pain,
Lest we become as those that we have slain;
And then in faith of love's great victories
Broken with wonder fling us to our knees.

OTHER BOOKS BY WILLARD WATTLES

Songs from the Hill. University Book Store,
Lawrence, Kansas.

Sunflowers, A Book of Kansas Poems. A. C.
McClurg & Company, Chicago.

Lanterns in Gethsemane. E. P. Dutton & Com-
pany, 681 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

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